



Christian Caregiving

A blog site with the goal of recognizing and helping family caregivers

Saturday, March 31, 2018

Easter's Meaning for the Caregiver

(I am re-posting a post I wrote before at Easter.)

What does Easter mean to you, dear Christian caregiver? How does it relate to family care-giving?

Easter means that the Lord Jesus came to this earth and lived a perfect life for you and me. He later died on the cross to pay the price for our sins, and then He arose again on the third day to prove that He had won over sin and death and Satan. If you and I have accepted his gift of salvation by repentance and faith, we are His child now and for eternity.

Easter also means that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, identifies with your pain and the pain of your loved one, dear caregiver. As you struggle to help your loved one who is perhaps fighting against an incurable disease, He identifies with you. Having suffered the worst possible pain for us on the cross He is able to sympathize with our heartaches and weaknesses. He is also an all powerful Savior to whom we can freely go for grace in our moments of sadness and overwhelming and crushing

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My E-mail

jesuschild54@hotmail.com

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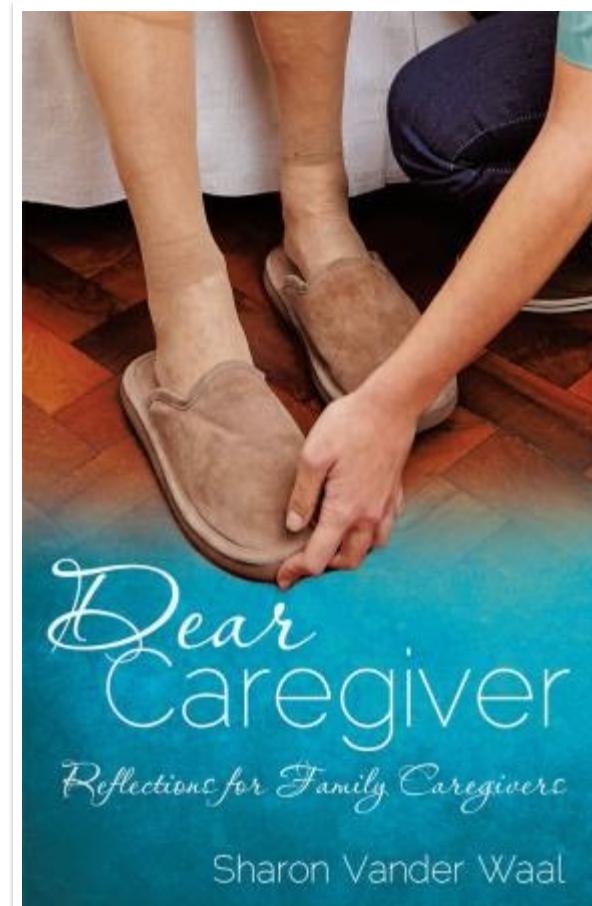
My book

needs. Check out Hebrews 4:15-16 in the New Testament.

Because of Easter and Christ's sacrifice you can freely approach God the Father Himself with your and your loved one's needs, dear Christian caregiver. You can cry out to Him for help and call Him your "Abba Father," because He considers you His special child. (Romans 8:15) Easter also means that when your heart is so weighed down with the heartaches and overwhelming circumstances of family care-giving that you do not even know how to pray, the Holy Spirit will intercede and pray for you! (Romans 8:26)

Easter for the caregiver means that although you will always face trials and troubles in this world, the Lord Jesus Christ has overcome the world. He is also your source of peace even in the most challenging of times. (John 16:33) Even in the overwhelming circumstances of family care-giving, even when we do not understand God's ways in allowing certain things in our lives, and even in the most unthinkable circumstances God is working for our ultimate good. We are victors in Him! (Romans 8:28)

Dear Christian caregiver, my hope for you would be that your loved one is healed on this earth. Whether he or she is healed on this earth or not, however, a child of God is whole and perfect upon entering heaven. No matter what happens in your care-giving situation you too, dear caregiver, will slowly heal emotionally and spiritually. God will always be with you, and joy will return one day. His love for you will never fail. He proved that love for you on the cross. That is the meaning of Easter for the caregiver and for all of us.



Click on one of the links below:

DEAR CAREGIVER

This is the link to my book DEAR CAREGIVER Reflections for Family Caregivers! This link is to Amazon. My book is also available online at Barnes and Noble and Xulon, my publisher. Amazon has a Kindle version as well as paperback version, and Barnes and Noble has a Nook version as well as a paperback version.

Posted by [Sharon](#) at [4:58 AM](#)

No comments:



Sunday, March 25, 2018

Personal Testimony Revisted

(Three years ago I was asked to give a personal testimony after the sermon that evening in my church. The sermon that evening was about patience endurance in trials and was based on part of James chapter five in the Bible. I posted the words I said that night here at this blog. I am reposting it today. Following is what I said that night.)

Good evening everyone. Let me say first that I was a little blown away by the request extended to me to briefly speak with you this evening. I am certainly not a great example of "patience in trials." Anyone thinking so, makes me very uncomfortable. Yet caring for Wayne and the years since his death certainly have been a spiritual experience and a lesson in leaning on the Lord.

Most of you know some of my story of being my husband, Wayne's caregiver. In 2006 Wayne was diagnosed with a rare neurological disease called Multiple System's Atrophy. In the midst of all this was my own diagnosis of breast cancer in July of 2007 about a year after Wayne's diagnosis, and my subsequent eight months of treatment following that.

Seeing my husband's body deteriorate during the next four and a half years after his diagnosis was definitely the most difficult experience that I had ever encountered on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level.

Once again here is the Amazon link to the order page for my book:

http://www.amazon.com/Dear-Caregiver-Sharon-Vander-Waal/dp/1629524263/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1401458206&sr=1-1&keywords=Dear+Caregiver

Wayne and I



I was a caregiver for my husband for four and a half years.

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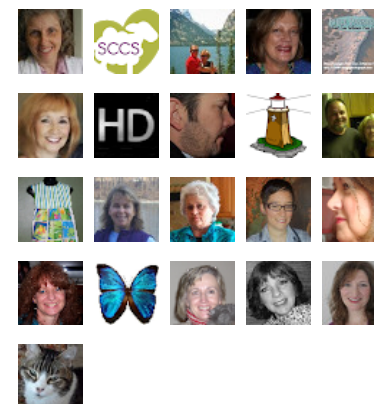
A difficult lesson I had to begin to try to learn during this time was to rest things with the Lord. I am not sure I did such a good job of that. Perhaps, Wayne did a better job of that. I never heard him ask, "Why?" during the whole course of his illness. So many things about care-giving were out of my control. The Lord is the only one who is really in control, however.

During this time I knew in my head at least that God was in control, but I think I subconsciously thought, however, that everything I did or didn't do could possibly lengthen or shorten the progress of Wayne's disease. It says in Psalm 139, however, that the number of our days are ordained for us by the Lord. I had and have to learn that I am not in control. God is the only one in control. I don't have to be so stressed out about everything, although I still fight that tendency. The Lord is still on His throne, and I am still His child.

I think I have learned that I can have a greater confidence, while at the same time I see my desperate need to depend on the Lord alone. He has become my confidence. Plus, now because of all I have experienced in these past years, I feel I have a story to tell, and I have passion to tell it. I have learned of the Lord's faithfulness in very difficult circumstances and that joy can reside alongside grief and difficult times, because joy is not the same as happiness which is dependent on perfect circumstances. Family care-giving and my years as a widow have been a time when my character was and is being stretched in ways I would never have imagined. It is a time when I have grown in my faith, and my faith has become so much sweeter.

Another thing I had to learn was the value of gratitude. A piece of advice was given to me while I was a family caregiver. That advice was to write

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Blog Archive

▼ 2018 (13)

▼ March (5)

[Easter's Meaning for the Caregiver](#)

[Personal Testimony Revisted](#)

[Emotional Roller Coaster](#)

[His Faithfulness](#)

[One Year Ago Today and Eternity](#)

► February (4)

► January (4)

► 2017 (50)

► 2016 (48)

► 2015 (50)

► 2014 (48)

► 2013 (49)

down a few things at the end of each day for which I was thankful. It was difficult to be thankful in the chaos and drama of family care-giving, but this gratitude exercise did much to shape my attitude and to see the little wonders of God in my life. It is a practice I still carry on today.

My past care-giving experiences has also given me an insight and concern for other people's struggles, especially family caregivers. It has given me a basis for being able to help them and for them knowing that I understand their struggles on many levels. It has given me a platform to tell my story or rather the Lord's story.

After Wayne's death I struggled with what was my new purpose in my post care-giving days. Family care-giving becomes so consuming that it can almost become one's identity instead of just a role. So I had to rediscover who I was as an individual and what my new roles were in life. My roles were no longer wife and caregiver. I think I have discovered that it is not a matter of a complete break with my past, but rather building on and using my past experiences and using them in new ways.

There are so many beautiful Scripture passages which have become so meaningful to me through the experiences of these past years. One of my favorites is Hebrews 13:5b which says, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." This is a verse that I write in every one of my books that I sign. It is a verse to which every Christian can cling.

About a month after Wayne passed away I started a blog to encourage family caregivers. They say once a caregiver always a caregiver, and I felt the Lord leading me to start this blog. It can be found at <http://christiancaregiving.blogspot.com> Finally, I wrote my book

► [2012](#) (52)

► [2011](#) (44)

About Me

Sharon

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called DEAR CAREGIVER Reflections for Family Caregivers. It was published in April of 2014.

And so Wayne has received his reward in eternity; and though I miss Wayne every day, God is with me.

I would say in conclusion, depend on the Lord. Trust His promises. Take time to be in His Word everyday. Don't give into fear. Also know that the Lord will use your difficult experiences in ways that you never imagined. We must tell our stories of God's grace in our lives. You may not write a book like I did, but God never wastes our experiences. We need to share them.

Posted by Sharon at 5:25 AM

No comments:



Sunday, March 18, 2018

Emotional Roller Coaster

(This is yet another chapter from my book Dear Caregiver Reflections for Family Caregivers available at Amazon and elsewhere online.)

September of 2010 proved to be emotionally draining in many ways for me as a caregiver. It was the beginning of many exceptionally stressful days and the prelude to my husband's death on January 2, 2011. It was an emotional coaster month.

On September 2, 2010 my mother-in-law passed away in the early morning. She was 88 years old, and except for her last two years of her life when she was fighting ovarian cancer, she had lived a healthy life. It was difficult to say good-bye to her, but

we knew she was now free of all sadness and sickness and was experiencing only pure joy with her Lord. We were happy for her.

During the week of my mother-in-law's funeral there were the joyful highs of having all three of our sons home together for the first time in three years. My husband, Wayne, also had a great day on the Sunday we were altogether. I hadn't seen him smile that much in a long time. Yet, as great as it was to have family around, there was a lot of stress in having a household of people along with taking care of my husband's needs.

There were also the stresses and lows of Wayne having a very difficult day both on Monday, the day before his mother's funeral, and again on Wed., the day after the funeral. On those days he did not function at all well and transfers were very difficult. There was also the stress of wondering if Wayne would be able to function well on Tuesday, the day of the funeral. (He did function well on Tuesday, and so was able to attend the funeral.)

In the days and weeks after my mother-in-law's funeral and after our children's families returned to their own homes there continued to be a whirlwind of emotions swirling around in my heart. My mother-in-law's decline and death and its accompanying grief tended to blend with my grief connected with my husband's illness and decline.

By September 2010, the constant ups and downs of my husband's disease really became draining. So often, Wayne would have one or two relatively good days followed by a "crash" day where he slept most of the day. These "crash" days sometimes also involved difficulty in managing his transfers to the bathroom, bed, the car, etc. His brain was simply having difficulty processing and making the moves he needed to make.

So those weeks in September of 2010 consisted of emotions swinging from one extreme to another. I felt stress because of all the emotions and all that had occurred. I do not know how I would have gotten through those days without the Lord. Dear Christian caregiver, lean on the Lord in those emotional roller coaster days.

Posted by Sharon at 4:57 AM

No comments:



Sunday, March 11, 2018

His Faithfulness

(This post is another chapter from my book, Dear Caregiver Reflections for Family Caregivers.)

It was August 24, 2010. It was my birthday. Family members were at our house to celebrate that night. Earlier in the day we had received a mobility chair for Wayne. It was perhaps a sign of things to come. Wayne's declines came fast and furious in the next four months, and the emotional anguish and stress proved heavy during that time.

Something else happened on the memorable day in August, however. One of my family members called to me to come outside to look at a beautiful rainbow that had appeared in the sky. That rainbow was indeed awesome! I had not ever remembered seeing such a beautiful and full rainbow across the whole sky like that rainbow.

That rainbow that day felt like a special birthday present to me from God Himself. It was a reminder to me of the faithfulness of my God, a God who said to me and continues to say to me that He will never leave me or forsake me. (Hebrews 13:5b in the Bible)

God has indeed proven Himself faithful in those months since that August day in 2010. The next few months in 2010, as I have alluded to before, were very stressful and discouraging as my husband's health deteriorated at an alarming rate. God provided strength and resources all along the way, however. Wayne entered heaven on January 2, 2011. He was free from the body in which he had been trapped and could now enjoy the Lord's presence forever. For me it was the beginning of a difficult grief journey. Through it all, however, the Lord has taught me so much about His faithfulness and my need to be dependent on Him. It has also deepened my relationship with the Lord and made me a more compassionate person.

Dear Christian caregiver, God never promises to give us a life without problems and

trials. Care-giving for someone with a serious illness is one of life's deepest trials. I know this is true, because I walked that path. God, however, has promised to walk with us through life's heartaches. He has promised to be faithful. Look for His wonders, dear caregiver. Rest in His faithfulness.

Posted by Sharon at [5:14 AM](#)

No comments:



Sunday, March 4, 2018

One Year Ago Today and Eternity

A year ago today my Mom passed away after having suffered a stroke a few days before that. I was with her the last few moments of her life. I wrote about that experience, about care-giving, and my reflections on eternity a few days after her funeral in March of 2017. Bear with me as I bring that post back today. Just click on the link below to reread that post.

http://christiancaregiving.blogspot.com/2017/03/eternity_11.html

Posted by Sharon at [4:59 AM](#)

No comments:



Sunday, February 25, 2018

Grandpa and God's Kingdom

As my husband's caregiver I saw my husband suffer many indignities as his disease progressed. He became more and more disabled until at the end when he was totally dependent on others for everything. On the surface that seems like such a waste of a

beautiful man's life. How was God's Kingdom advanced through all he suffered? For that matter how was God's Kingdom advanced through his eventual death and lost to his family? Would not God's Kingdom be better served by him still being alive as a healthy vibrant husband and grandpa?

I recently experienced similar questions in my mind when I had a major back pain flare-up, and my activities were significantly curtailed for a period of time. Yet God often uses these very things for His Kingdom. It personally reminds us our own weaknesses and makes us more aware of our need to be dependent on the Lord alone. This in turn makes us more useful in His Kingdom.

About a week and a half ago I had one of my three sons' family in my home for a visit for a few days. This family's home is in the UK. Sometimes I lament the fact that I do not have more opportunities to have an influence, especially spiritually, on my grandchildren due to the distance they live from me. Yet I had a couple beautiful interactions during the time this son's family was with me.

One of these interactions was with my nine year old granddaughter shortly before they left. I own a few collector dolls. Three of those dolls were smaller dolls, and they were on a shelf in the basement where the family was sleeping. My granddaughter remarked how she liked my dolls. Because I have done similar things for other grandchildren, I offered her the opportunity to choose between one of the three dolls to take home with her as her own. She chose the doll with the color hair closest to her own.

What was also unique about this doll, however, is the fact that one of her legs was missing. The other two dolls have all their limbs. This led to a discussion about how some people have disabilities and the fact that we all have weaknesses. We also talked about how we are all special in God's eyes, if we love Him. We further talked about how our weaknesses make us more dependent on the Lord. Finally, we talked about how all disabilities will be eliminated some day when Jesus returns.

This granddaughter, although she says she remembers a smile her Grandpa gave her, would barely remember her Grandpa except through pictures. Yet perhaps her Grandpa's influence on her life is much stronger because of the disability of his last years on earth.

Posted by [Sharon](#) at [5:01 AM](#)

No comments:



Sunday, February 18, 2018

Remember the Love

(This is a chapter from my book, Dear Caregiver Reflections for Family Caregivers.)

One day in August of 2010 a few months before my husband's death and in the midst of the chaos of care-giving I was having a good day. The weather was beautiful and free of all the heat and humidity we had been experiencing. Secondly, my husband was having a good day, and he had experienced a good therapy session. Finally, I had just finished reading some letters that my husband, Wayne, and I had written to each other in 1970 and 1971 before we were married.

Wayne and I met and dated from April of 1970 to the end of the school year, and then we dated again in the next school year until our marriage on July 30, 1971, I was a teacher then, and I went home to my parent's house during the summers. He went to summer camp for the Army Reserves both summers. The first summer, I also spent 6 weeks involved in a summer mission program, and the second summer I was at my parent's home preparing for our wedding in my home town and state while he was getting things squared away in Wisconsin for our first home.

On that particular August day in 2010 I was inspired to read our love letters which we had written to each other those two summers when we were separated while dating. It proved a real joy to me to reread those letters that day, and I found myself smiling often. Those letters reminded me that the first summer Wayne was more sure of his feelings for me than I was for him. I knew I liked him, but I needed to be sure about love and marriage. The next summer when we were corresponding we were engaged, and both of us were sure of our love for each other. It was fun to reread about our young love.

I thought that rereading these old letters might make me feel a little sad thinking back to those days and comparing it with the life we were now living dealing with Wayne's

neurological condition. I guess it did a little. We had matured so much since those early days, however, and I was glad for that growth in maturity. I actually probably felt more sad about no longer being able to do some of the fun things we had done together during our “empty nest” years.

So reading those letters put a smile on my face that day. It reminded me of what was, and it reminded me of the beginning of our love. I love reading inspirational (Christian) romance books as a way to relax. Reading these letters was a little like that, except it was my story. That day, I had a smile on my face.

Dear Christian caregiver, terminal disease can change a relationship with a caregiver and his or loved ones who are ill. Take time often to remember the love that was and still exists. It will lighten the load.

Posted by [Sharon](#) at [4:43 AM](#)

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